

Historic Façade Materials Assessment Findings Report
for
1059 Willamette Street
Eugene, Oregon

Assessment conducted by
Shannon Sardell, Balance Architecture
with assistance from
Aaron Jensen from Pioneer Waterproofing
October 2019



Figure 1 Historic photo of the Montgomery Ward and Co. building at 1059 Willamette Street, 1935 looking south east from Willamette Street. Photo credit, Lane County Historical Museum.

Executive Summary

Initially constructed in 1930 as a two-story commercial space, Montgomery Ward Co. occupied the entire building from 1930 through the late 1960's in downtown Eugene. The building was significantly remodeled between 1970 and 1975 and opened as the Downtown Center for Lane Community College. The building was used by Lane Community College until 2012 and has been vacant until 2019.

The exterior has been clad completely in an Exterior Finishing Insulation System that has protected the materials used in a historic 1960's remodel of the Willamette Street Elevation. As the building changes ownership and plans are developed for commercial and residential uses of the property, it is recommended that the original 80-feet of the Willamette Street elevation be preserved. This will maintain the building scale for surrounding buildings on the National Register while also honoring the mid-century modern history of downtown Eugene.

Critical to this preservation effort is the removal of the EFIS cladding and an analysis by a structural engineer that can confirm that the mid-century modern cladding system and awning hangers are structurally sound to carry a new awning. Of high priority is the restoration of the ceramic masonry surface and any repointing or filling of holes or mortar joints. Of lesser but still significant importance is the reconstruction of the awning over the sidewalk and the storefront windows and entry sequences

The estimated cost for critical and high priority work is close to \$75,000. The cost for other work will be approximately an additional \$45,000 - \$65,000.

On August 26, 2019 investigation work was conducted on the west facing, street elevation of 1059 Willamette Street to determine the extent of remaining historical fabric intact underneath a painted stucco and Exterior Insulation Finishing System (EFIS). Historic photographs, courtesy of the Lane County Historical Museum, suggested that underneath this modern cladding system there might be elements of the original, historic Willamette Street elevation that was originally a Montgomery Ward and Co. retail store occupying the entire building until the late 1960's.



Figure 2 Current photo of the vacant building at 1059 Willamette Street, 2019. looking south east from Willamette Street. Photo credit, author.

Current conditions of the Willamette Street elevation included three large windows and an entry sequence under a large arched fabric awning and canopy stretching the length of the building. There are currently no openings in this elevation above the street level and the blank surface is articulated only with an inset panel of the same EFIS north of the shadowed remains of the Lane Community College Downtown Center sign that has been removed.

Though there were no architectural drawings found for this building, the historic photographs indicated that the board formed, poured in place concrete structure and metal sash window openings were intact along the north pedestrian alley at the first-floor level. These visible remains were used to scale the 80-foot long Willamette Street elevation and create a plan for investigations.

Three areas were selected for inspection based on a historic photograph of the elevation taken in 1935 (Figure 3). These areas were selected for their location to render information about transom windows above the awnings, the condition of the sign band above the transoms, the



Figure 3 Historic photo of the Montgomery Ward and Co. building at 1059 Willamette Street, 1935 looking east from Willamette Street. Photo credit, Lane County Historical Museum.

upper floor window condition and treatment (if any), and the details remaining in the parapet and outer piers. It was expected that any remaining decorative details would have been made out of terra cotta tiles and that any remaining windows would have wood frames. There was some concern that the transoms and upper floor windows had already been modified due to a 1965 photograph found in the digital archive of the Lane County History Museum (Figure 4). See Appendix A for the investigation plan proposed to Pioneer Waterproofing.



Figure 4 Historic photo of the Montgomery Ward and Co. building at 1059 Willamette Street, 1965 looking north t from Willamette Street with 11th Avenue intersection in the foreground. Photo credit, Lane County Historical Museum.

Site Inspection

On August 26, 2019, Aaron Jensen from Pioneer Waterproofing used a 40-foot boom lift to access the areas agreed on in the investigation plan. When on site, the locations for access had to be flipped to the south side of the elevation from the north end due to the size of the lift and other access constraints including the awning, surrounding buildings, poles, and other parked vehicles.

The investigation started at 22-feet above the ground at the approximate height of the historic sign band between the first and second floors and worked down to approximately 18-feet above the sidewalk. The corner piers were investigated to within four-inches of the outer edge of the building and extended in about five-feet.

The south corner concrete pier is original to the 1935 photographs and is in good condition. The one observed in this assessment has areas of the original surface treatments and paint color of a buff yellow/cream. There is intact detail where the concrete was scored with vertical grooves about five inches from either edge (Figure 5).

As the exploration towards the center of the sign band and transoms continued, metal studs running vertically were uncovered. They had been screwed into a continuous surface of buff colored, ceramic coated, concrete blocks to allow for a continuous fastening surface for the EFIS material. These studs also created a cavity within which it was observed that the buff

colored concrete blocks extended from the header over the ground floor windows and doors to the upper most reaches of the building. Further metal studs blocked the visual inspection toward the middle of the elevation (Figure 6).



Figure 5 Inspection photo of the current building at 1059 Willamette Street, 2019 south exterior pier facing Willamette Street. The red arrows point to the vertical grooves in the concrete work that are original. Photo credit, author.

At this juncture in the inspection a 1965 image of the building from the Lane County History Museum was compared to the materials that were observed (Figure 4). It was concluded that the entire Willamette Street elevation was updated just before the 1965 picture was taken. These materials and mortar were popular in retail store front construction at that time.

The observation of the parapet was abandoned after it was concluded that there had been such a large modernization campaign. The newer masonry material extended to the parapet and was confirmed by the 1965 image.

One more attempt at understanding the cladding material in place under the EFIS was undergone at the north side of the elevation where a metal plate had been screwed into the material previously at a location where a material assessment may have been conducted (Figure 7). At this location only some undetermined spray foam material and glue were observed as the mechanism attaching the EFIS to the elevation. There were no other decorative

elements from the original, 1930, Montgomery Ward Co. building remaining on the Willamette Street elevation.



Figure 6 Inspection photo of the current building at 1059 Willamette Street, 2019 with south exterior concrete pier to the far right of photo with steel stud screwed directly into ceramic finished concrete block. Bracket for removed sidewalk awning to the right of the photo. Photo credit, author.

Further research about the Montgomery Ward retail empire revealed that their national business model was slow to respond to the movement of the middle class out of the downtown core during the 1950's. By 1957, the company had not opened any new stores since the 1930's and had an image of being outdated and run down compared to other up and coming department stores like JC Penny and Sears. With a significant change in leadership in the late

1950's, in the 1960's the company invested in modernizing its image across the entire country and this store front alteration was likely part of that company wide movement.¹

This early 1960's remodel of the Montgomery Ward building, though not from the original construction date or detailing, does make it eligible for consideration on the National Register of Historic places. According to the *Eugene Modernism: 1935-65* context statement, this building, like so many in the downtown core in the mid to late 1950's was either expanded or remodeled.² This is one of the few remaining and intact store fronts from this period.

The condition of the concrete units, concrete mortar and awning brackets behind the EFIS is good where it was inspected along the south side of the Willamette Street elevation. However, there is some concern regarding the condition of the masonry under the inset EFIS panel. During inspection, the metal cover plate within the inset panel was pulled back only to find a spray foam like material behind it. No testing was done to further understand the ease with which the foam and glue used in the surface attachment of the EFIS could be removed from the ceramic face of the 1960's cladding materials. The cladding surface is smooth which could aid with removal because the foam and glue would not be able to permeate the materials pores, but this finish might be easier to scratch.



Figure 7 Inspection photo of the current building at 1059 Willamette Street, 2019 with metal cover plate circled in red and the EFIS inset panel outlined by read rectangle. Photo credit, author.

¹ Montgomery Ward Inc. accessed in Wikipedia, Sept 26, 2019.
https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Montgomery_Ward

² Eugene Modernism: 1935-65, pages 5.3 – 5.4, 2003.

Also of consideration in the preservation of the 1960's remodeled elevation, are a number of holes in masonry units where screws have been used to affix the metal stud braces for the support of the current EFIS cladding material. It is likely that the screw holes would only be found in the areas around the edges of the elevation outside the inset panel (Figure 7).

Because the awning brackets from the 1960's addition were left in place, restoration of the awning is possible. There is only minimal rust staining below the awning bracket that was revealed during the inspection. The other brackets for the suspended awning are partially exposed through the current EFIS material and have experienced continual exposure. Further inspection is needed to ensure safety of a suspended awning over a public walking space (Figure 8).



Figure 8 Inspection photo of the current building at 1059 Willamette Street, 2019. The red arrows indicate where the awning brackets project through the EFIS finish material. Photo credit, author.



Figure 9 Inspection photo of the current building at 1059 Willamette Street, 2019. This is a detail of the awning bracket condition with minimal rust staining below and good condition of the mortar joint between masonry units. Photo credit, author.

Conclusion

Underneath the current EFIS cladding material is a continuous stack bond masonry unit surface with a buff colored, ceramic finish. The stack bond masonry units extend from the top of the ground floor store front to the parapet and across the entire 80-feet of the Willamette Street elevation. At either end of the masonry infill are concrete piers that date to the original construction in 1930. These piers are also in good condition and have some of the original vertical scoring details remaining.

Within the finished masonry elevation are a series of metal brackets that supported a suspended, flat awning over the store front display windows and entry. The awning brackets and the masonry finish materials are not original to the 1930 construction date but were part of an early 1960's movement by the Montgomery Ward Company to update their image and shopping experience in their stores across the United States. The remodel of this building in Eugene was also part of a local movement in the downtown core to update and attract shoppers to the area.

Future Development

Though not original to the date of construction, the masonry surface uncovered on the Willamette Street elevation is more than 50 years old and is significant to the commercial developmental history of downtown Eugene. This elevation could be restored using the 1960's materials and proportions. It would provide a street front scale appropriate for the context of other historic buildings along Willamette Street. Further preservation of the building mass might not be necessary. This type of preservation, called "facadism", would only be appropriate or possible if a ground floor commercial store front was used and new openings in the masonry along Willamette Street were not necessary in the existing two-stories. Further building square footage above two stories could be added with a modest set back at Willamette Street.

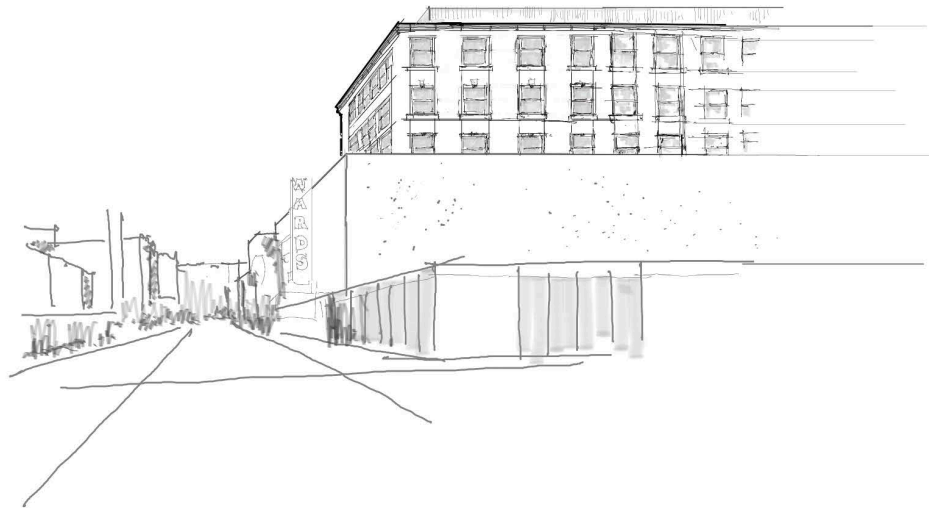


Figure 10 11 Design sketch of the mid-century modern Montgomery Wards store front with an addition of levels set back and above the existing property. The design and location of additional square footage should be open ended but the approach of preserving the Willamette Street elevation would preserve the scale and context of other buildings along Willamette Street, reuse some of the existing building fabric, and provide an engaging pallet of design potential on the existing site. Credit, Balance Architecture.

The overall cost for preserving the mid-century modern elevation is estimated at roughly \$125,000 - \$140,000. The Oregon State Historic Preservation Office has a grant program called “Diamonds in the Rough” that would be worth considering in 2020.

	Unit Cost	Total Cost
EFIS Removal	\$20 /sq ft	\$56,000
Masonry Restoration	80' x 35'	\$20,000
Awning Replacement	Linear Foot	\$25,000
Store Front Replacement	Square foot	\$20,000 - \$35,000
Total Estimate	For Willamette Street elevation only	\$125,000

Removal of the EFIS is troublesome because of the particulates that are created and become airborne during the process. The entire area will need to be tented to contain the insulation. While some of the EFIS is attached to metal stud shims, there is also a significant area that is attached to the mid-century masonry with adhesives. Removal of these pieces will require some unknown mechanical and application-based techniques. Further testing is recommended to find the gentlest but most effective removal process.

Holes created from the screws attaching the metal stud framing for the EFIS would need to be filled with a color and finish appropriate masonry filler. Again, mockups and testing are highly recommended to get the closest match and longest lasting applications. Generally, the mortar joints are in good condition. They should be inspected but it is assumed that repointing would not be necessary as part of this restoration.

All of the awning brackets need to be evaluated for deterioration and structural integrity with the assistance of a structural engineer. It is assumed that there would be a 50% replacement rate due to their exposure through the EFIS wall cladding (Figure 8). Areas below the brackets where there is rust staining would need to be cleaned with an environmentally friendly cleaner and in the gentlest means possible to avoid scratching the concrete block's ceramic surface of the concrete blocks. Best practices would allow for testing for appropriate before completing the cleaning process. A new awning could be suspended in a similar location to the mid-century Montgomery Ward elevation seen in historic photos from Lane County History Museum (Figure 4).

Conclusion

The preservation of a mid-century commercial store front along Willamette Street was not the original goal of this material investigation where it was hoped that underneath the current

exterior cladding system the original 1930's store front elevation would be rediscovered. The early 1960's façade that was discovered and is in good condition was part of a downtown that boasted being "...the regional center of activity, not only for retail businesses but also for civic and cultural events." What was uncovered at 1059 Willamette Street represents part of that modern regional center in scale, material, and style that can continue to be used in parallel with new construction and uses today.

Bibliography

"Montgomery Ward." *Wikipedia*, https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Montgomery_Ward.

Accessed, Sept 26, 2019.

Wright Sally and David Pinyard. *Eugene Modernism 1935 – 65*. Oregon: Eugene, 2003.